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Message Text

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ACTION NEA-10

INFO OCT-01 EUR-12 ISO-00 CIAE-00 DODE-00 PM-05 H-01
INR-07 L-03 NSAE-00 NSC-05 PA-01 PRS-01 SP-02
SS-15 USIA-06 TRSE-00 IO-13 /082 W
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R 020939Z FEB 78
FM AMEMBASSY ISLAMABAD
TO SECSTATE WASHDC 5704
INFO AMEMBASSY ANKARA
AMEMBASSY COLOMBO
AMEMBASSY DEKCA
AMEMBASSY KABUL
AMCONSUL KARACHI
AMCONSUL LAHORE
AMEMBASSY LONDON
AMEMBASSY NEW DELHI
AMEMBASSY PARIS
AMEMBASSY TEHRAN
CINCPAC

C O N F I D E N T I A L ISLAMABAD 1148

PACOM FOR POLAD

E.O. 11652: GDS
TAGS: PINT, PK, IN, IR
SUBJECT: MLA SHOWS SENSITIVITY TO SUSPICIONS RE VAJPAYEE/SHAH VISIT

REF: A) ISLAMABAD 0864, B) ISLAMABAD 0935, C) ISLAMABAD 1127, D) ISLAMABAD 0791, E) NEW DELHI 1637

1. CHIEF MARTIAL LAW ADMINISTRATOR GENERAL ZIA UL-HAQ HAS CALLED "ABOUT TWENTY" OF THE COUNTRY'S POLITICAL LEADERS TOGETHER FOR A MEETING ON 4 FEBRUARY TO BRIEF THEM "ON THE STATE OF THE ECONOMY AND ON PAKISTAN'S RELATIONS WITH ITS NEIGHBORS."
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2. THERE IS NO EVIDENCE TO SUGGEST THAT THIS IS A RESPONSE TO WALI KHAN'S CALL (REF A) FOR A ROUNDTABLE CONFERENCE OF POLITICAL LEADERS. RATHER THE BRIEFING IS IN FULFILLMENT OF THE CMLA'S COMMITMENT TO PERIODICALLY KEEP POLITICAL LEADERS ABREAST OF DEVELOPMENTS. THE SUBJECT MATTER AND THE TIMING SUGGEST, MOREOVER, THAT ZIA IS ATTEMPTING TO DEFUSE SOME OF THE HEAT BEING

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GENERATED BY THE PENDING VISITS OF THE INDIAN FOREIGN MINISTER AND THE SHAH OF IRAN TO ISLAMABAD BY APPEARING TO BE RESPONSIVE TO DEMANDS BY POLITICIANS THAT HE CONSULT THEM BEFORE THE VISITS TAKE PLACE.

3. THE MLA HAS BEEN SHOWING INCREASING SENSITIVITY DURING THE LAST WEEK TO PUBLIC SUSPICION THAT THESE TWO VISITS ARE SOMEHOW RELATED AS PART OF A LARGER SCHEME TO SERVE INDIAN AND IRANIAN INTERESTS AT PAKISTAN'S EXPENSE (REF B). IN PRESS BACKGROUNDERS, WHICH ARE BEING FAITHFULLY CARRIED IN THE VERNACULAR AND ENGLISH LANGUAGE PRESS, MFA SECRETARY-GENERAL AGHA SHAHI HAS BEEN AT PAINS TO SET THE RECORD STRAIGHT, BEFORE THE VISITORS ARRIVE, ON PAKISTAN'S OPPOSITION TO SCHEMES FOR A REGIONAL "COMMON MARKET" AND FREER TRANSIT OF GOODS. HE DID THE SAME IN A MEETING WITH AMBASSADOR AND VISITING CINCPAC ADM WEISNER, EMPHASIZING HIS VEXATION IN COPING WITH PUBLIC SUSPICION ABOUT THE IMPLICATIONS AND THE INTER-RELATIONSHIP OF THESE VISITS (REF C).

4. MOST OF THE SENIOR POLITICAL LEADERS INVITED, INCLUDING THOSE FROM BALUCHISTAN, AND FROM THE PNA, ARE EXPECTED TO ATTEND THE 4 FEBRUARY MEETING. NEITHER BEGUM BHUTTO NOR THE OTHER THREE INVITED REPS FROM THE PAKISTAN PEOPLES PARTY (PPP) IS LIKELY TO ATTEND, BUT THE INVITATION TO THE BEGUM IS SURPRISING IN VIEW OF THE CMLA'S ATTEMPTS TO DISCREDIT BOTH THE PARTY AND ITS LEADER, FORMER PRIME MINISTER BHUTTO. A CLUE TO ZIA'S THINKING ON THIS IS
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REVEALED IN HIS REMARK, ON 30 JANUARY, TO A VISITING BRITISH NEWSMAN THAT MRS. BHUTTO IEFS CUT ABOVE SOME OF THE "ILL-GUIDED, POORLY QUALIFIED, AND UNEDUCATED" LEADERS OF THE PAKISTAN NATIONAL ALLIANCE (PNA).

5. IN A RELATED DEVELOPMENT THE MLA HAS ANNOUNCED THAT LGEN CHISTI, THE CMLA'S ADVISOR ON KASHMIR AFFAIRS, WILL MEET WITH THE LEADERS FROM AZAD KASHMIR WHO HAD REQUESTED A HEARING BEFORE THE VAJPAYEE VISIT (REF D). FEBRUARY 2 URDU PRESS REPORTS THAT THE CMLA WILL ALSO MEET WITH KASHMIRI LEADERS.
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